



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Department of Health and State Board of Animal Health Warn Residents About Risk of Salmonella Infection From Baby Birds

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health and the State Board of Animal Health are warning residents about the risk of salmonella infection from baby birds, including chicks and ducklings, according to Julie Goplin, epidemiologist with the Department of Health.

Between May and September 2007, the Department of Health investigated seven cases of salmonella related to contact with baby chickens. Of those, three children from the same family were hospitalized with severe salmonella infections after playing with chicks.

“Cases of salmonella related to handling baby chicks or ducklings continue to be reported from several states and can be serious,” Goplin said. “Even chicks and ducklings that appear healthy can be infected and can shed salmonella in their stool. Oftentimes, the birds’ feathers and beaks are contaminated, so just touching the birds and then putting a finger in the mouth or touching food can lead to infection.”

This year, the Department of Health and State Board of Animal Health are working together to provide educational materials to farm supply and animal feed stores about health requirements on interstate movement of animals, as well as information about preventing the spread of salmonella. These educational materials also will be available to the public who purchase baby birds and feed at these and other venues.

The risk of acquiring salmonella infections from baby birds can be reduced by following these guidelines:

- Do not purchase chicks or ducklings as gifts.
- Do not let children younger than 5 touch or handle baby birds or the packaging and cages in which they are being held.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling baby birds or touching objects in contact with them.
- If objects such as toys, pacifiers or bottles come into contact with the bird environment, wash them with warm soapy water.
- Do not allow anyone to eat or drink while interacting with the baby birds or their environment.
- Keep baby birds away from areas where food is prepared or consumed.
- Talk to your veterinarian, nurse or doctor about health risks associated with baby birds.

Symptoms of infection with salmonella include diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fever, usually within eight to 72 hours after exposure. The illness usually lasts four to seven days, and most healthy people recover without antibiotic treatment. Infants, young children, the elderly and those who have impaired immune systems are at greater risk for severe infections.

Anyone who has contact with birds and animals should wash their hands with warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds after handling them.

For additional information, contact Julie Goplin, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378 or the State Board of Animal Health at 701.328.2654.

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